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Portrait Of Rightist Leader

By Peter Edson

WASHINGTON — (NEA) —

The man picked to organize the new right-wing Committee for the Co-ordination of Conservative Effort is Edward Hunter. He is a former New York, Newark, New Orleans and Philadelphia newspaperman, foreign correspondent, lecturer and author of half a dozen books on international communism.

As a war correspondent he covered Hitler's advance into the Rhineland, the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. In World War II he served in the Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of CIA. He was a consultant on psychological warfare during and after the Korean War.

Perhaps his greatest claim to fame is that he put the term "brainwashing" into the English language.

After interviewing American prisoners of war released by the Chinese Communists in the Korean War he wrote two books, "Brainwashing in Red China" and "Brainwashing: The Story of the Men Who Defied It." They revealed the Red tortures of POW's and served as the basis for indoctrination courses to prepare American military personnel for Communist cruelties under captivity.

After returning from his last overseas stint in Afghanistan three years ago, Hunter says he sensed a change in this country. Anti-Communist sentiment had taken hold at the grass roots and was growing. He decided to work with this movement and he became a consultant to congressional committees investigating international communism.

His most recent claim to fame is that it was his testimony before the Senate Internal Security subcommittee last July which sparked the probe of dazzling military officers' speeches by Pentagon and State Department censors.

Hunter moved to the Washington area several months ago, with some misgivings. He says it is the first world crisis he has not covered at the front. But he has a feeling now that the next "war" may be to save the United States from communism and that many of the battles will be fought in Washington.

He has had no political background and only one previous experience in American anti-Communist organization. He headed a national committee which cleaned the Commies out of the American Newspaper Guild when "it couldn't be done."

Hunter is 60, of medium height and build, with a writer's rounded shoulders and quick movements. He speaks with energy and dedication. He is a high school graduate, described in Who's Who as "self-educated." He is a Methodist. He describes himself as "an old-fashioned liberal." He married a White Russian refugee, the former Tatiana Pestrikoff, in 1932. Their son served three years in the Marines.

At the recent Washington meeting of 100 representatives from rightist organizations, Hunter was given the job of naming a new Committee for the Coordination of Conservative Effort. He intends to select members from the top-200 out of the total of 2,000 right-wing organizations and leaders. He has often been labeled a "rightist" but committee will be.

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His idea is that he will establish no office of his own, other than his Arlington, Va., apartment. He would like to use the facilities of some of the 50 or more right-wing groups that have their national headquarters or offices here.

Hunter says he has been given no money with which to operate and his own income from royalties, lecture and consultants' fees is not sufficient to carry the expense.

Before the first formal meeting of his committee, now scheduled for June, he hopes to have ready budget estimates of what it will cost to operate, and recommendations for the stipends to be paid a permanent staff.

He does not now anticipate that the expenses will be large. He does not see the committee as a national political action group. Every cooperating organization will be left completely free to carry on its own projects.

Hunter's idea is that his committee will function — as someone suggested during the exploratory meeting of rightists called here by the Rev. Dr. Billy James Hargis of Christian Crusade — like the "Committees of Correspondence" in pre-American Revolutionary times.

It will keep the patriotic leaders informed of what the others are doing. Only now they will be keeping the Redcoats instead of just the Redcoats.

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